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Paper No. 16

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AUG 04 2004

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
John M. Callahan
Application No. 09/642,858
Filed: August 21, 2000
Attorney Docket No. NAN012

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ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed June 21, 2004, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration or petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition Under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply to the "Notice of Allowance and Issue Fee Due" (the "Notice") mailed May 16, 2003, which set a statutory period for reply of three-month from its mailing date. No response was received within the allowable period, and the application became abandoned on August 17, 2003. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on November 13, 2003.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)¹ must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,² unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due

¹ As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

² In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

The instant petition lacks item (3).

The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.

“In the specialized field of patent law, . . . the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. The Commissioner’s interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference.”³

“[T]he Commissioner’s discretion cannot remain wholly uncontrolled, if the facts **clearly** demonstrate that the applicant’s delay in prosecuting the application was unavoidable, and that the Commissioner’s adverse determination lacked **any** basis in reason or common sense.”⁴

“The court’s review of a Commissioner’s decision is ‘limited, however, to a determination of whether the agency finding was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.’”⁵

“The scope of review under the arbitrary and capricious standard is narrow and a court is not to substitute its judgment for that of the agency.”⁶

The standard

“[T]he question of whether an applicant’s delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account.”⁷

³*Rydeen v. Quigg*, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff’d without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir.1991) (citing *Morganroth v. Quigg*, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); *Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg* 849 F.2d 1422, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) (“an agency’ interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference”); see also *Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defence Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) (“if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency’s answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.”)

⁴*Commissariat A L’Energie Atomique et al. v. Watson*, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 126 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (emphasis added).

⁵*Haines v. Quigg*, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987) (citing *Camp v. Pitts*, 411 U.S. 138, 93 S. Ct.1241, 1244 (1973) (citing 5 U.S.C. §706 (2)(A)); *Beerly v. Dept. of Treasury*, 768 F.2d 942, 945 (7th Cir. 1985); *Smith v. Mossinghoff*, 217 U.S. App. D.C. 27, 671 F.2d 533, 538 (D.C. Cir.1982)).

⁶*Ray v. Lehman*, 55 F.3d 606, 608, 34 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1786 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing *Motor Vehicles Mfrs. Ass’n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co.*, 463 U.S. 29, 43, 77 L.Ed.2d 443, 103 S. Ct. 2856 (1983)).

⁷Id.

The general question asked by the Office is: “Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?”⁸ Nonawareness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.⁹

Application of the standard to the current facts and circumstances

In the instant petition, petitioner maintains that the circumstances leading to the abandonment of the application meet the aforementioned unavoidable standard and, therefore, petitioner qualifies for relief under 37 CFR 1.137(a). In support thereof, petitioner asserts that the Notice was mailed to an incorrect address, notwithstanding the request for change of correspondence address filed by petitioner prior to the mailing of the Notice.

With regard to item (3) above, the aforementioned argument of petitioner in support of petitioner’s belief that the above-cited application was unavoidably abandoned is not persuasive. The reason petitioner’s argument must necessarily fail are addressed below.

Petitioner’s argument relative to the filing of the a request for change of correspondence address and the failure of the Patent and Trademark Office to acknowledge the same is noted and is persuasive, however; a successful petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) requires that petitioner establish that the entire delay in filing a proper response to the last action was unavoidable—beginning from the due date for a reply to the filing of a grantable petition. Based on the facts presented, it appears that petitioner was aware of the problems with application from at least August 21, 2003, and received the Notice of Abandonment mailed November 13, 2003, yet the instant petition was not filed until June 21, 2004. Petitioner must, therefore, account for the seven-month delay in filing the instant petition in order to establish that the entire delay in filing a proper response to the Notice was unavoidable.

Petitioner may wish to consider filing a petition to revive based on unintentional abandonment under 37 CFR 1.137(b). A grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the required reply (already submitted), the required petition fee (\$1,330.00 for a large entity and \$665.00 for a verified small entity), and a statement that the **entire** delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional.

⁸See In re Mattulah, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

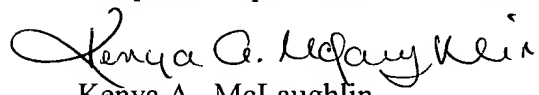
⁹See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D.D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel’s nonawareness of PTO rules does not constitute “unavoidable” delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without the assistance of counsel.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Mail Stop Petitions
 Commissioner for Patents
 Box 1450
 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By facsimile: (703) 308-6916
 Attn: Office of Petitions

Telephone inquiries should be directed to the undersigned (703) 305-0010.


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